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ABSTRACT

One in a series of Native American instructional materials, this booklet introduces elementary students to the tribes of the plains culture area, extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River and from Texas to Canada. Written in simple language, the booklet begins with a brief description of the region--its extreme climate and the importance of the buffalo, which provided food, clothing, and shelter. Other topics include the design of tipis, the methods of buffalo hunting and the uses made of the buffalo, the Sioux legend of creation, the Lakota language, pictographs and manual signs used to communicate across language groups, beadwork, and the symbols used to decorate Sioux hunting horses. Student activities include constructing a model tipi (patterns and instructions are provided), translating and writing pictograph stories, creating a geometrical beadwork design, and learning a traditional game. Evaluation questions assess the students' ability to describe the plains culture area and compare it with the woodland, desert, and coastal culture areas covered by other booklets in this series. The text refers to films and books containing related information. (JH)

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PLAINS CULTURE AREA

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NATIVE AMERICAN CURRICULUM SERIES

Cathy Ross & Roger Fernandes

- GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT NATIVE AMERICANS
- WOODLAND CULTURE AREA
- PLAINS CULTURE AREA
- COASTAL CULTURE AREA
- DESERT CULTURE AREA
- THE WAY IT IS TODAY

Published by
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Classroom kits containing authentic artifacts from each of the culture areas are available to accompany these books. For more information, write to CURRICULUM ASSOCIATES
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The Plains Culture Area extends from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River and from the Canadian border into Texas. (Many tribes lived in Canada also, as there were no borders then.) Some of the states that are in this area are Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho, Nebraska, Kansas, Wyoming, Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, Arkansas, and Texas. The climate in this area is extreme, with hot summers and very cold winters.

The people of the plains were known as buffalo hunters, since the buffalo was the main source of their food, clothing, and shelter. Because these people followed the buffalo herds, they had no permanent homes and were always on the move.

Some of the tribes in this culture area are:

Cheyenne	shy-ANN	Crow	CROW
Sioux*	sue	Commanche	co-MAN-chee
Arapaho	a-RAP-a-hoe	Mandan	MAN-dan
Blackfeet	BLACK-feet	Kiowa	KY-o-wa
Gros Ventre	grow-VONT	Kansas	KAN-sas
Flathead	FLAT-head	Pawnee	paw-NEE
Arikara	a-RICK-a-raw		
Assiniboin	a-SIN-a-boin		

*called Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota in their own languages

Locate these tribes on the map included in the General Information Kit.

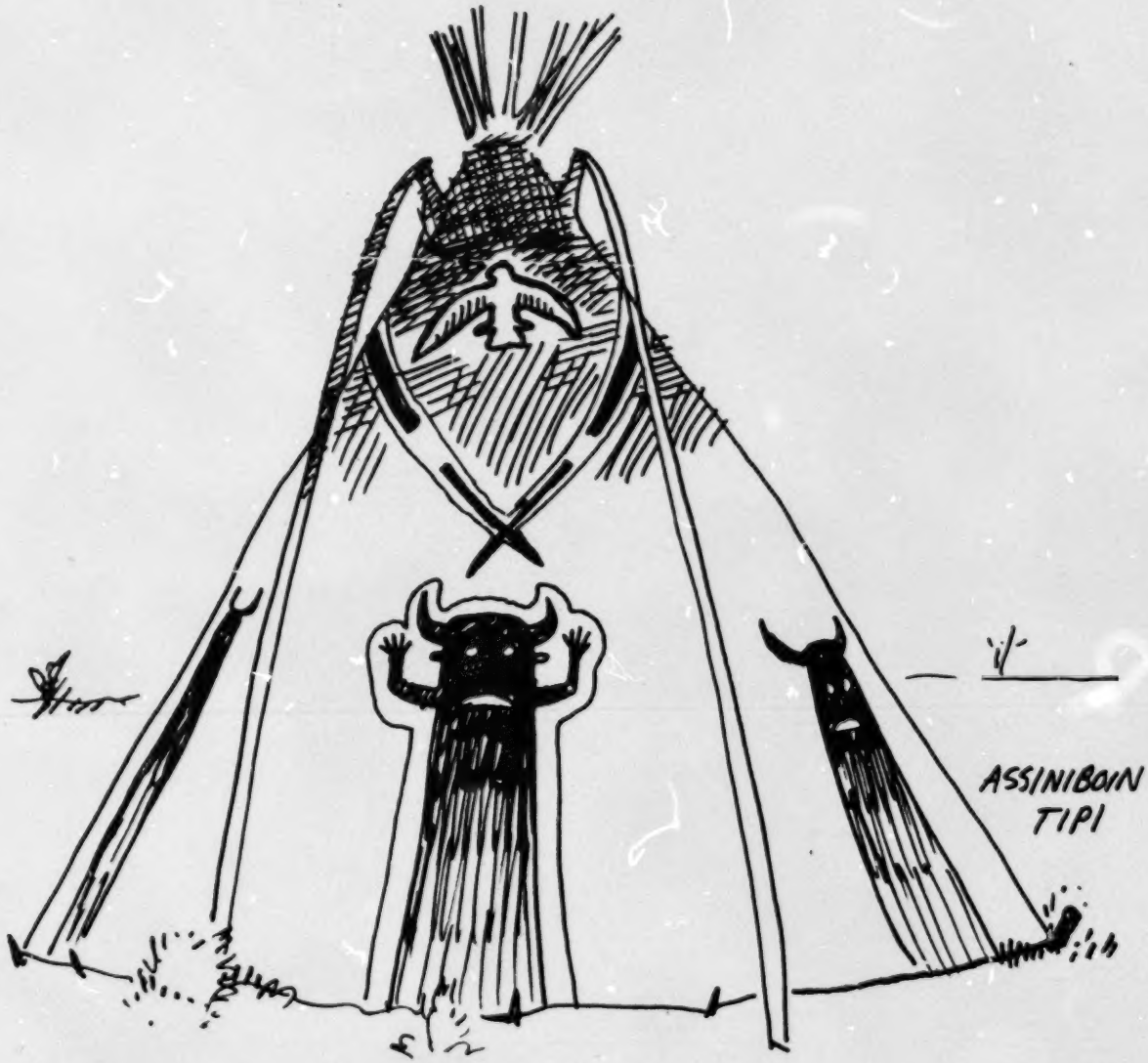
View the filmstrip "Plains Indians"

Complete your culture chart on this area as the information is presented.

6

7

Most Indians of the plains lived in tipis, made out of poles and buffalo hides. The word tipi is of Lakota (Sioux) origin. Some dictionaries spell it "tepee" but the correct Lakota spelling is "tipi." "Ti" means dwelling and "pi" means used for. An average tipi was about 18 feet high and 14 feet in diameter and could house a family of 8. A tipi could be set up in 15 minutes and taken down in three. Near the top of the tipi were two smoke flaps, which could be used to control the draft of the fire inside. Certain colors and signs were painted on the outside of the tipis because they were believed to have special powers. The men were responsible for painting the tipis, and the women were in charge of setting them up and taking them down. The following pages contain a tipi pattern and Sioux designs so that you can construct a model tipi and paint it.



MODEL TIPI CONSTRUCTION

MATERIALS NEEDED

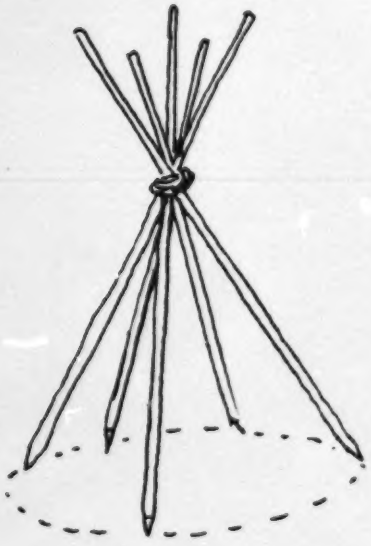
buckskin, canvas, or other cloth, or paper such as a shopping bag or construction paper, 8½" x 11"
Tipi pattern for tracing
5 or 6 straight sticks, 12 inches long

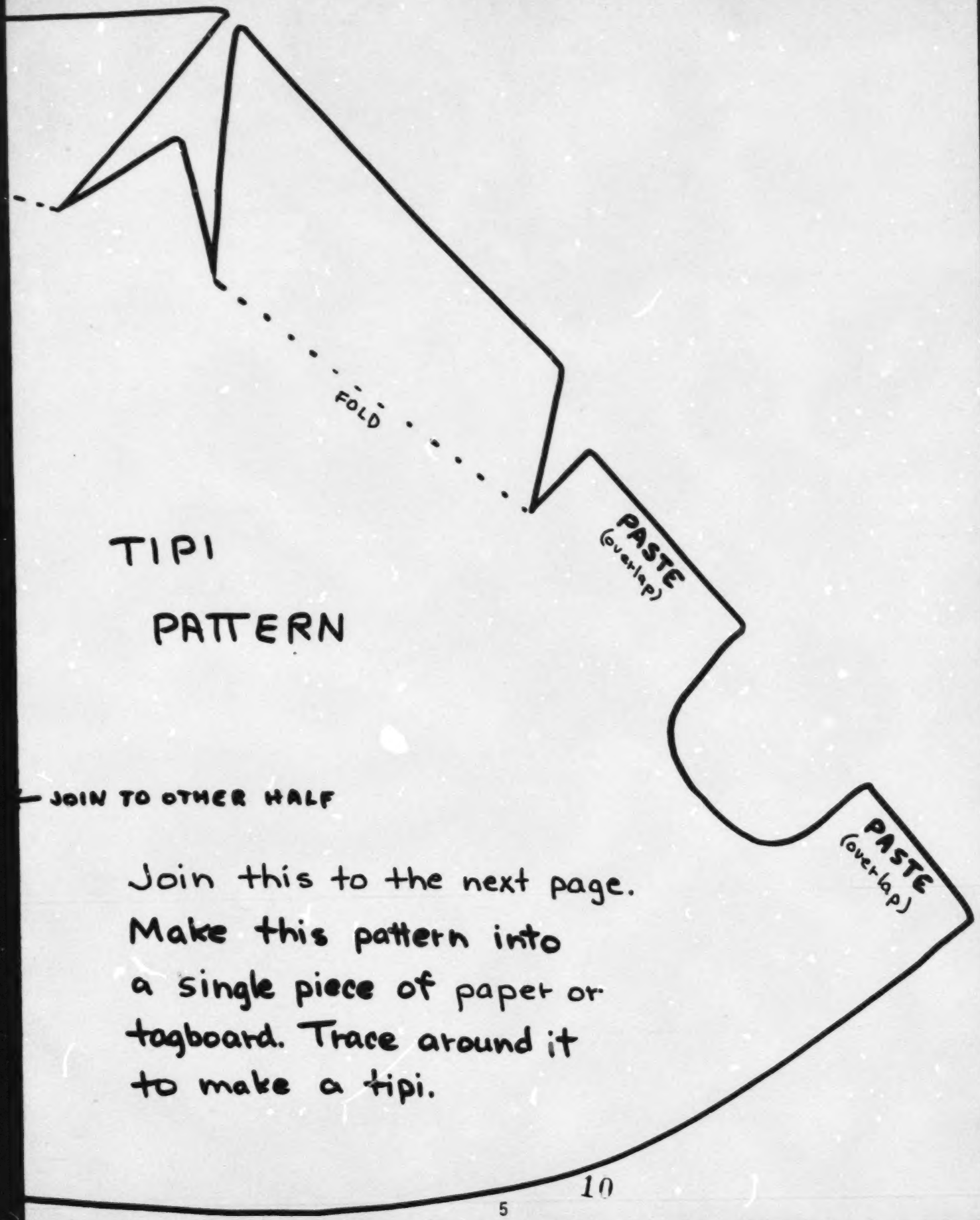
Paint, magic markers, or crayons of different colors

tape or glue

HOW TO MAKE YOUR TIPI

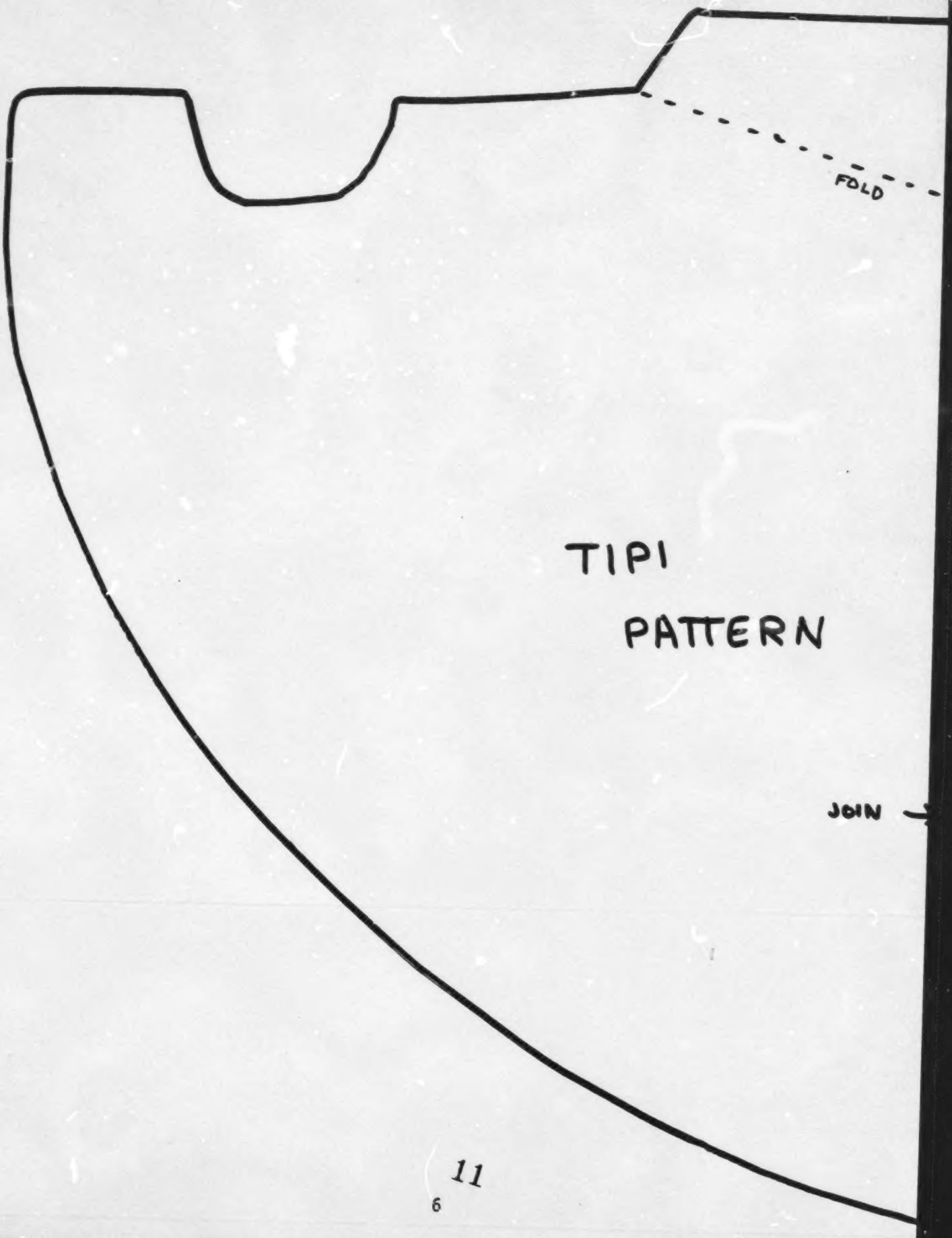
1. Tie the sticks together 3" from the top ends.
2. Using the pattern, cut out a tipi cover.
3. Paint Indian designs on the cover.
4. Place the cover over the sticks. Tape the poles to the cover on the inside of the tipi.
5. Paste or tape the tipi together at the front. The Sioux often used sticks to hold the tipi together--see illustration below
6. Fold back the smoke flaps.



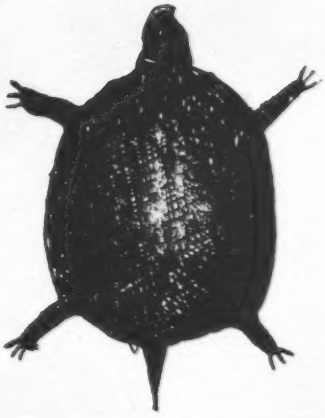


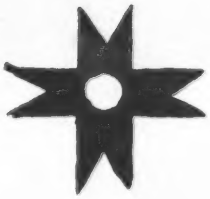
TIPI PATTERN

Join this to the next page.
Make this pattern into a single piece of paper or tagboard. Trace around it to make a tipi.


FOLD
TIPI
PATTERN
JOIN

Here are some Sioux designs for you to put on your tipi.





HOW THE SIOUX NATION WAS BORN

Many, many winters ago when the world was young, a great flood visited the western plains. Many tribes came to the hills of the prairies to get away from the rising waters. In the lands of the rising and setting suns, many nations were destroyed and gone from the earth forever. The water continued to rise on the hills until it covered all the people. The old ones say their flesh and blood was turned into the red pipestone found in these hills today.

While the tribes were drowning, a huge eagle suddenly appeared in the sky. He flew down close to the flood waters so that a beautiful maiden could catch hold of his feet. The eagle carried her away to the top of a great tree on a cliff high above the water.

When the waters at last went down, the maiden had given birth to twins. Their father was the great eagle who had saved the maiden's life.

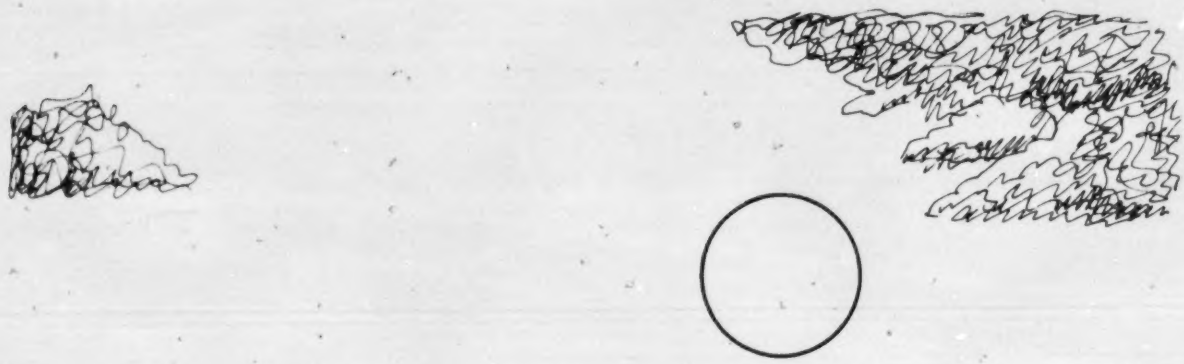
This was the beginning of a new tribe of people. They are Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota--the Sioux Nation. The land of the pipestone belongs to them. The eagle feather is proudly worn by Sioux men of honor and the eagle is looked upon as a messenger of the Great Spirit, Wakantanka.

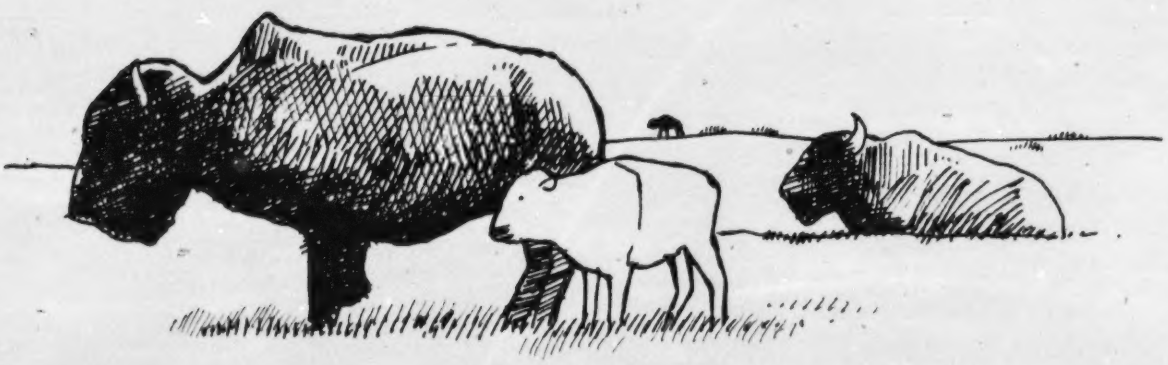
(You may want to view the film "Sioux Legends" (Paramount - 1974)

The life of the plains people was centered around the buffalo. It provided them with everything--food, clothing, shelter, and countless other items. The people followed the great herds as they roamed across the plains, moving their tipi villages as the herds moved on.

Buffalo hunting was an activity requiring skill and teamwork. One method was to gradually surround the herd in a large circle, then move in and shoot them with bows and arrows. Another method was to have one person wear a buffalo hide and lead the herd close to a cliff. Then the rest of the hunters would stampede the herd over the cliff. All parts of the buffalo were put to use. Nothing was wasted. The picture on the next page shows the many ways in which the various parts were used.

In the 1700's, there were millions of buffalo roaming the plains. By 1900, there were practically none left. What happened to them? Perhaps someone in your class could do some research on this and report back to the rest.





HIDE

Buckskin:
moccasin tops, cradles, winter robes, bedding, breechclouts, shirts leggings, belts, dresses, bags, pouches, quivers, tipi covers, gun cases, coup flag covers, dolls

Rawhide:
containers, shields, buckets, moccasin soles, rattles, drums, drumsticks, splints, cinches, ropes, thongs, saddles, stirrups, knife cases, bull boats, quirts, armbands, lance cases, horse masks, belts, bullet pouches, horse forehead ornaments

MUSCLES
sinew, bows, thread, arrows, cinches, glue

SKULL
Ceremonies
sun dance
prayer

BRAINS
HIDE PREPARATION

FOUR CHAMBERED STOMACH
first stomach contents: frostbite, skin diseases
liner: container for carrying & storing water, cooking vessel

BONES
knives, arrowheads (ribs), shovels, splints, winter sleds, saddle trees, war clubs, scrapers, quirts, awls, paint brushes (hipbones), game dice

HORNS
cups, fire carrier, powderhorn, spoons ladles, signals, toys, headdresses

MEAT
(every part eaten)
pemmican (converted)
hump ribs
jerky (converted)
inner parts eaten on the spot

TAIL
medicine switch
fly brush
whips

TONGUE
best meat

BUFFALO CHIPS
fuel
signals
ceremonial smoking

BEARD
ornamentation of clothes & weapons

SKIN OF HIND LEG
Moccasins or boots (pre-shaped)

HOOFS & FEET
glue, rattles

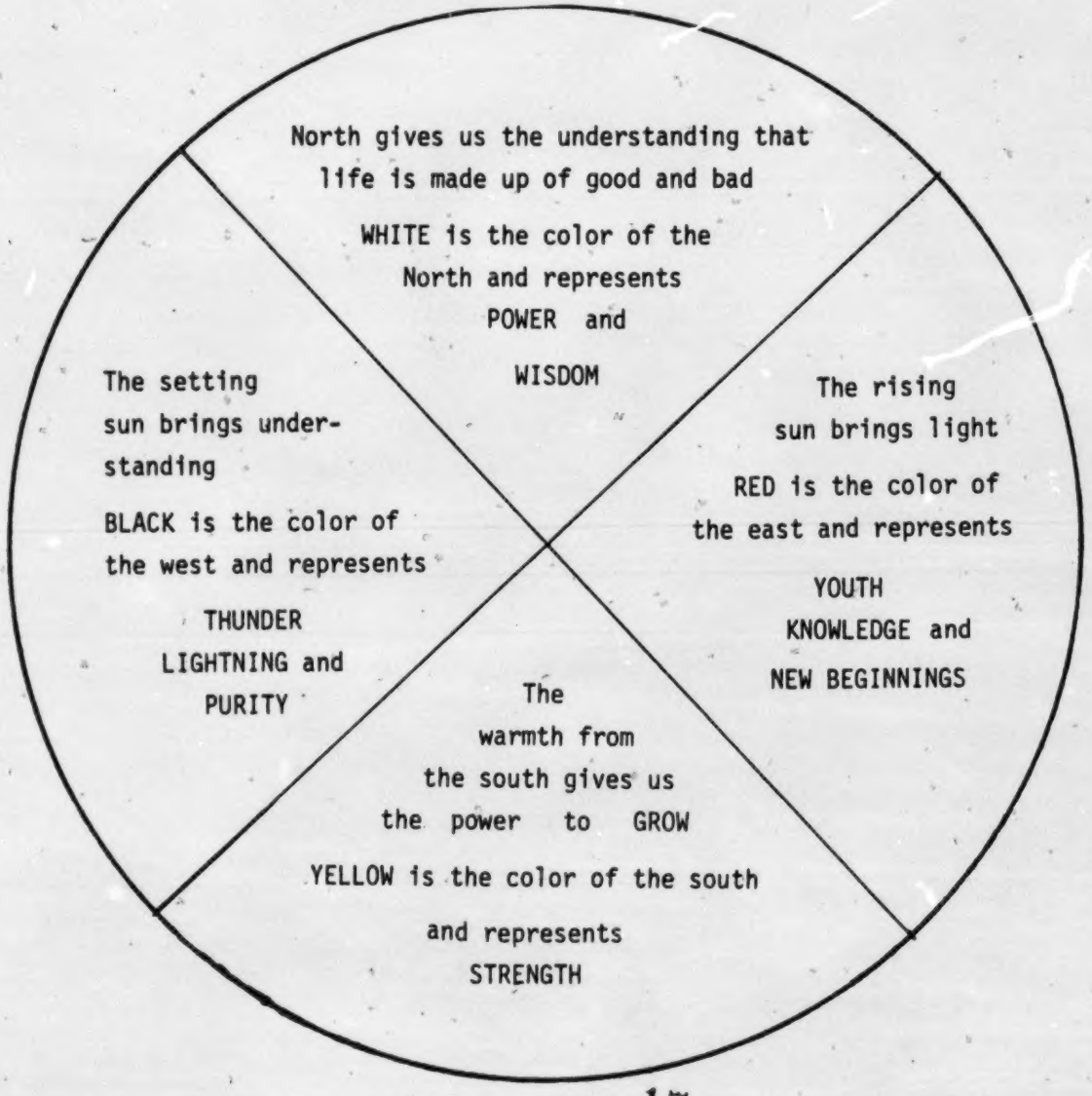
HAIR
headdresses, pillows, ropes, ornaments, halters, medicine balls, filler

PAUNCH
lining for buckets, cups, basins, dishes

HOW THE BUFFALO WAS USED

The Indians of the plains believed that everything in the world was a part of a great circle. The sun from the east and the moon from the west were in the shape of a circle. The seasons followed one another in a never-ending circle. The life of a person seemed to move in a circle too. A child learned from his elders and when the elders died, many of their teachings lived on in their children. The tipi formed a circle on the ground. A camp was always in the form of a circle. In a meeting or council, the people all sat in a large circle.

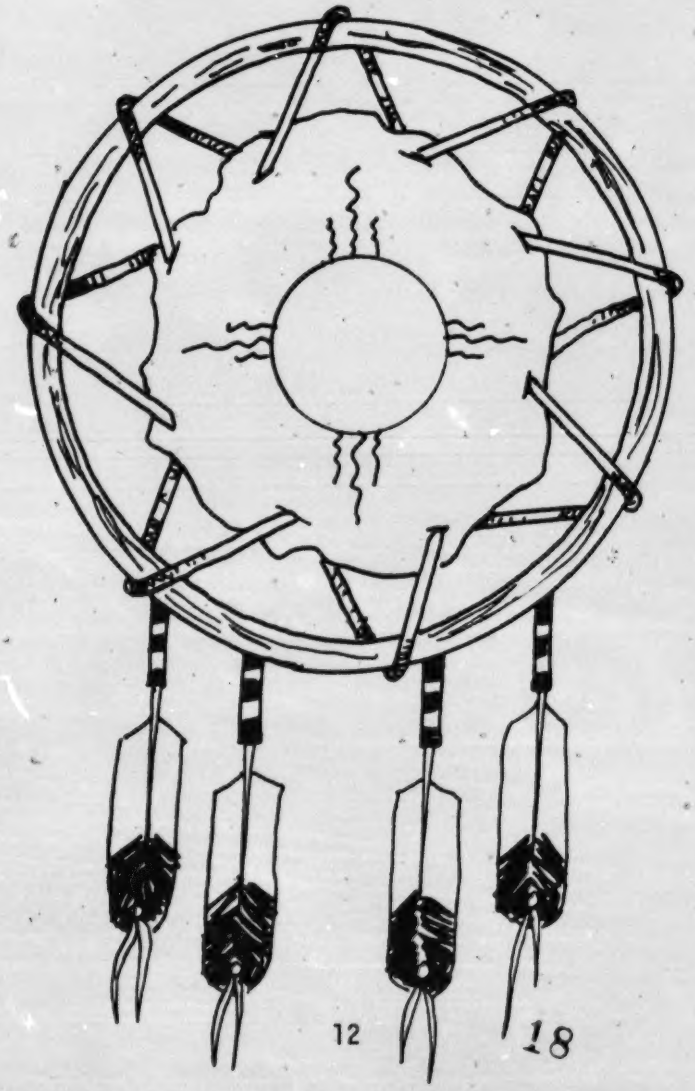
The Sioux believe that the universe has four directions and that man stands in the center. Each direction has a special power:


North gives us the understanding that life is made up of good and bad
WHITE is the color of the North and represents POWER and WISDOM
The rising sun brings light
RED is the color of the east and represents YOUTH KNOWLEDGE and NEW BEGINNINGS
The warmth from the south gives us the power to GROW
YELLOW is the color of the south and represents STRENGTH
The setting sun brings understanding
BLACK is the color of the west and represents THUNDER LIGHTNING and PURITY

The Lakota language of the plains culture area was very complex and is difficult to learn today. Here are the numbers from one to five in that language:

Lakota Word	Pronunciation	English Word
nica	nēē cha	zero
waNci	wawn shē	one
nuNpa	noon pa	two
yamni	yawm nēē	three
topa	toe pa	four
zaptaN	zawp tawn	five

Hold up several fingers of one hand and ask "donaktahe" (doe KNOCK ta hey) "How many?" See if someone can answer you in the Lakota language.



As the Indian Nations moved from place to place they often found other people speaking languages they did not understand. In order to communicate, a symbolic language developed, which included sign language and picture writing. Picture writing used many small symbols which stood for words or ideas. The symbols varied from one area to another, but generally could be read by all tribes. They used these symbols to decorate their homes, record important events in their lives, and to communicate with others. Historical records of events were often painted on animal skins. Stories were usually written in a circle. We have written one for you below in straight lines to make it easier for you to read.

Read it from left to right. Use the next page to help you translate it.

For more pictographs, see the book Indian Picture Writing by Robert Hofsinde.

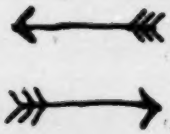
Try writing your own picture-story!

Man, boy

Woman, girl

Village

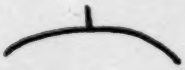
Peace


War

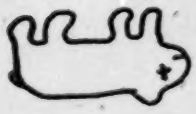
Good

Bad

Sunrise


Noon

Sunset


Dead bear

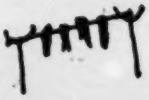
Leave, go

Return, come

Hunt

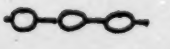
Sad

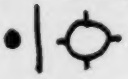
Happy

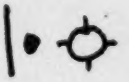

Food

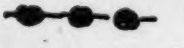
Day

Night

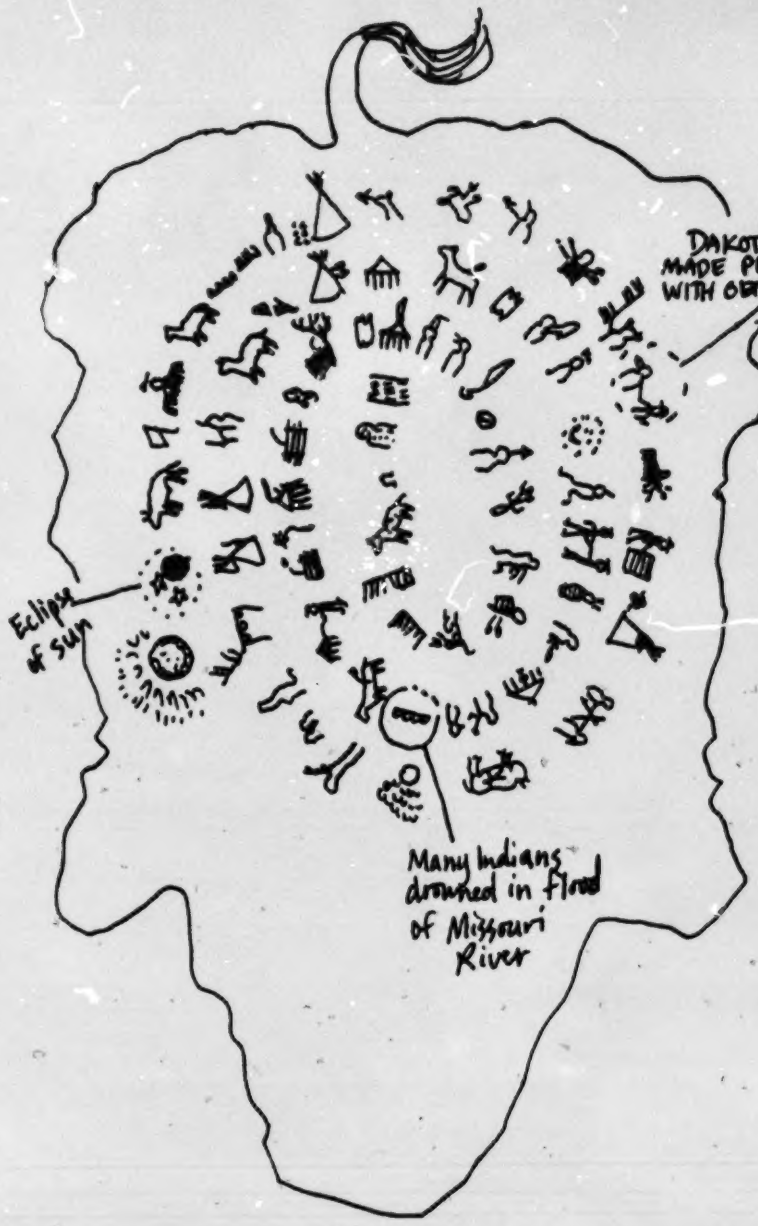

3 Days


Yesterday


Tomorrow


3 Nights

3 Years

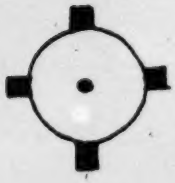

DAKOTAS MADE PEACE WITH GENERAL HARNEY
LONE DOG'S WINTER COUNT
Eclipse of sun
Many Indians drowned in flood of Missouri River

A Dakota (Sioux) named Lone Dog painted a history of the years from 1800 to 1871 on a buffalo hide. This was called a "winter count" because the plains people counted the years according to how many winters they had survived. Both the Dakotas and the Kiowas used this method of keeping their history. Lone Dog's Winter Count is now in a museum in South Dakota. Lone Dog used picture writing to show an important event for each year. You can recognize some of the symbols. White people are always shown wearing a hat. A roof with lines below is a dirt lodge (Mandan). Tipis and animals can be easily recognized. The story begins in the center and goes around in a circle. The first symbol, many lines in stacks, shows that many people died. The next figure shows an Indian with spots. This means that many Indians died of smallpox.

The Sioux often painted their horses to give them special powers. They painted their horses before going to war and before going hunting.

A hunting horse was given markings to bring good luck from Wakantanka, the Great Spirit. The designs were painted very carefully because the success of the hunt could depend on the quality of the artwork.

Below are some of the signs used for decorating hunting horses. Your teacher will duplicate the horse on the next page and you can paint or draw these signs on it. DO NOT DRAW IN YOUR BOOK. After you use these signs, make up another sign of your own that has special meaning for you and put it on your horse. To show ownership of your horse, you could make your hand print on the back of your paper. This is how the Sioux showed ownership of their horses. If you mixed your paper up with those of other people, could you find your own? Do you think this is a good way of marking horses? What did non-Indians do to mark their horses?



The sun of happiness was the most important sign used. It would bring good weather for the hunt.

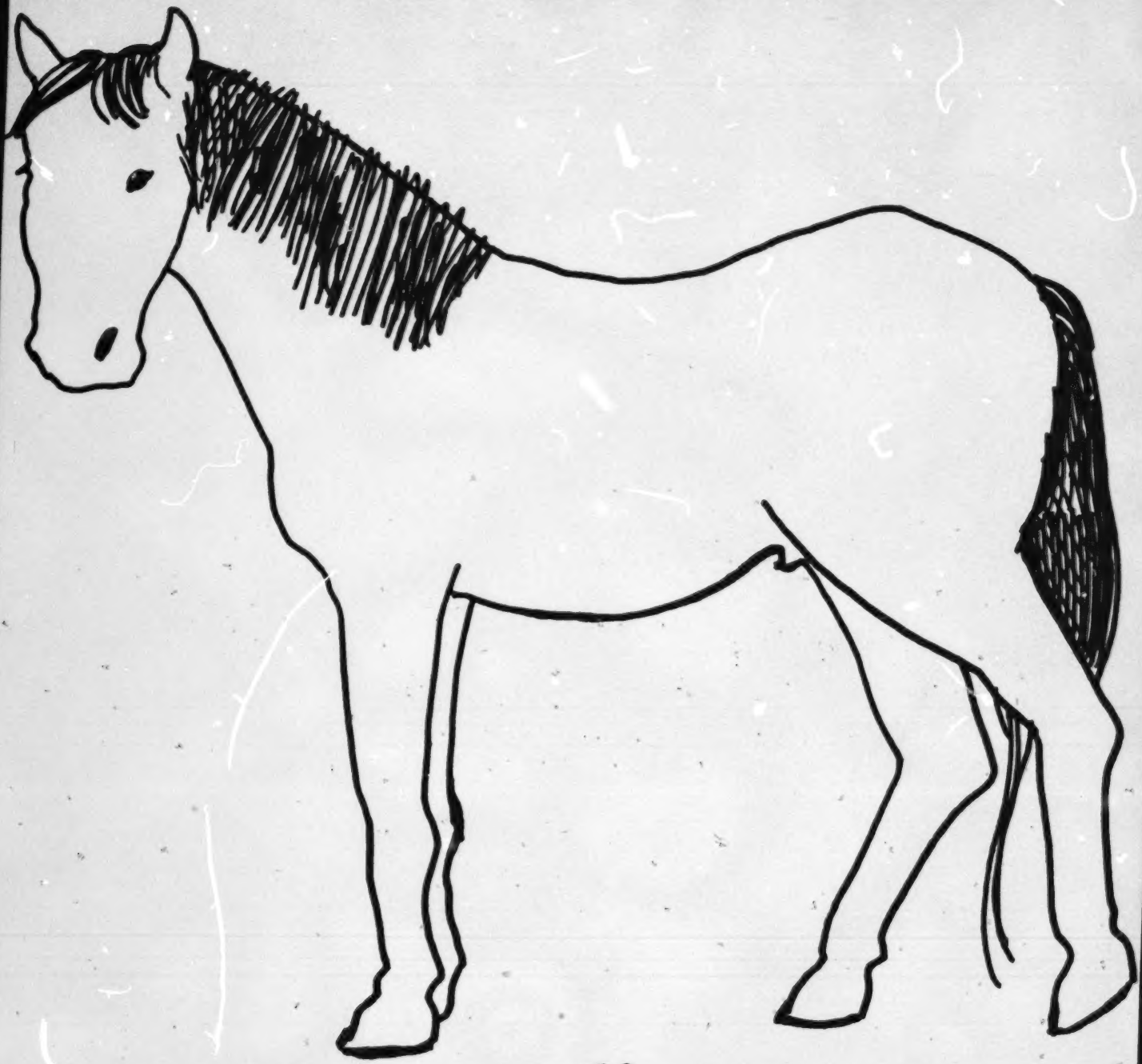
A sacred white buffalo gave thanks to Wakantanka, the Great Spirit, and asked his help for the hunt.

A circle of vision was painted around the horse's eyes so he could see things that were far away.

Arrows on the horse's legs gave him speed.

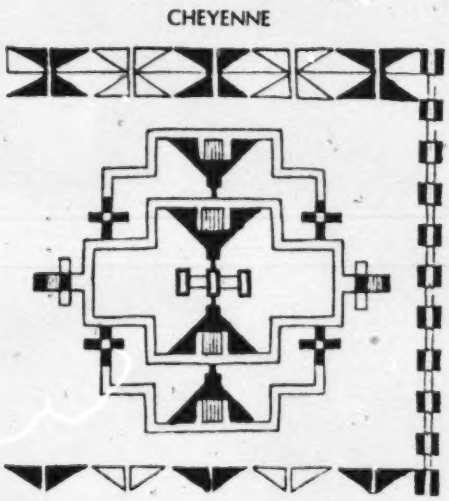
A fence was put on the horse's neck to keep good luck from leaving.

Stars on the horse's hooves showed him the right way to go.

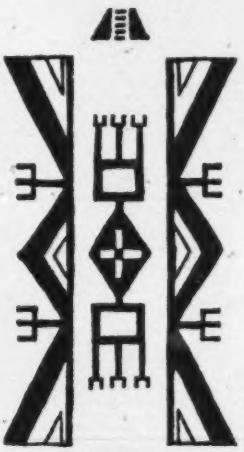


The small colored beads that Indian people used to decorate their clothing were brought over from Europe by the white settlers. Before this time, the Indians used tiny stones, animal claws, bones, teeth, dyed porcupine quills, and shells. These could be made into jewelry or sewn to clothing and other items. The trade beads enabled them to form even more intricate designs. The people of the plains culture probably used beads more than any other culture area, although the woodland people also did beadwork and used the trade beads as wampum, or money. Beads were sometimes woven into patterns on a loom. (See the modern beading loom in the kit.) Plains beadwork is usually in a geometric design, while woodland beadwork is usually in patterns of flowers and leaves. You can create a plains beadwork design using ¼ inch square graph paper. You can either copy one of the plains designs below or create a design of your own.

CROW



CHEYENNE



DAKOTA

*From the book American Indian Design and Decoration by LeRoy Appleton

The name of this game is Pebble Patterns. Indians from the plains culture area played this game. You will need a partner to play this game. To begin, get some pebbles which are somewhat alike but also have some special shapes or markings.

Tell the other player to turn around and not look. Then you arrange the pebbles into a pattern. On a piece of paper, copy down the way the pebbles are arranged. The other player can then turn around and look at the pebbles for ten seconds. Then you mix up the pebbles and have the other player try to put them back into the original pattern. The paper will be your "answer key."

A pebble pattern might look like this:

This game will improve your visual skills and also help improve your memory. Indians used this game of skill for this, but also used it just for fun.

Evaluation Questions

1. Briefly describe this culture area in your own words. Include food, clothing, shelter, and art.

2. Name three tribes from this culture area.

3. In what part of the United Sates is this culture area located?

4. Tell one way in which this culture area is <u>different</u> from another one you have studied.

5. What does the circle represent to the Plains people?

6. Write one word in the Lakota language.

7. Why did Plains men paint their horses?

8. What does the word "tipi" mean?

9. What is a "winter count"?

10. Draw one pictograph symbol and tell what it means.